

DETERMINING IF A DIET CHANGE IS NEEDED



When addressing a behavior change, one of the first steps is to look at the patient’s nutrition and medical factors. Obesity and poor nutrition can lead to a variety of health issues that could cause a change in behavior and a decrease in welfare for the pet.

As a practitioner, one of your best tools to evaluate where the pet is nutritionally is to review what they are eating through an examination of the pet food label. The following checklist and tips can help you and your team determine if a diet change recommendation is needed for the health of the pet.

- Start with a complete diet history, weight, and body condition score.
 - The Fear Free® - Blue Buffalo™ [Diet History Form](#) is a great tool to help facilitate this step.

Review the label of the pet’s current food and always check 5 things:

- Brand & Product Name:**
Confirm this is the food they are feeding.
- Type of Product:**
Is this intended as a food, topper, or treat?
- Life Stage:**
What life stage is the product formulated for? If “Growth,” is it large breed appropriate?
- Guaranteed Analysis:**
Is it complete and balanced?
- Calories:**
What is the caloric content?



DON'T FORGET TO CONSIDER TREATS, TOPPERS, OR PEOPLE FOOD WHEN MAKING YOUR CALORIES/DAY RECOMMENDATION!

Calculate how much your clients should feed and compare to what they report feeding.

- To determine how much they should be feeding, use a daily feeding calculator (e.g., VIN) and the information you have gathered:
 - Kcal/cup or kcal/can from label
 - Current body weight
 - Ideal body weight (based on BCS)
- Compare results with what your client reports feeding

See the other side for considerations for changing a pet’s food...

TO CHANGE OR NOT TO CHANGE YOUR CLIENT'S PET FOOD



Is there a medical need for changing the food to a therapeutic diet?



Is the owner happy with what they feed?



How is the pet performing on the current diet?

- Is this product appropriate for this pet (complete & balanced, appropriate life stage, etc.)?
- Does the pet look good, is s/he healthy, and is the product meeting the pet's needs?
- Do they need to modify the quantity of food fed?

BASED ON THE CONSIDERATIONS ABOVE:



IF THERE IS A MEDICAL NEED OR A PROBLEM WITH THE FOOD BEING FED, MAKE YOUR RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE AND GIVE YOUR REASONS.



IF THE OWNER IS HAPPY WITH WHAT THEY FEED AND THE DIET IS PERFORMING WELL, THINK TWICE ABOUT MAKING A CHANGE JUST TO MAKE A CHANGE.

- Some clients will be resistant to change to a new diet if they perceive your reason for making a change is based solely on brand, especially if your clinic carries the recommended food.
- We are often frustrated when a client won't follow veterinary recommendations, but we ourselves may not be respecting their choices or reasons. When clients feel heard and respected, they are more likely to hear and respect in turn.